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ABSTRACT

This pamphlet explains how to be prepared and plan for bomb threats and describes procedures to follow once a call has been received. The content covers (1) preparation for bomb threats, (2) evacuation procedures, (3) room search methods, (4) procedures to follow once a bomb has been located, and (5) typical problems that search teams will encounter while searching buildings. (JF)

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Bomb Threats and Bomb Search Techniques

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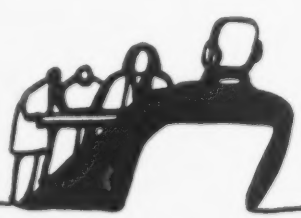

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Emergency Telephone Numbers

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Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms

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Army Explo. Ord. Disp. (EOD)

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Foreword

Today, we are confronted with militant groups, student groups, "super" patriots, criminal elements and scores of others who manufacture and use explosives and incendiary devices in an effort to rebel against the "Establishment".

We will not attempt to analyze the chain of events which triggered this civil unrest. We do know that varying degrees of harassment are being employed by individuals and groups which take advantage of peoples' natural fear of explosives.

Bombing and the threat of bombing have created a need for practical knowledge to cope with the increasingly violent activities of people who represent segments of unrest in our society. Repeated criminal acts which use or threaten to use explosives against educational institutions, industry, law enforcement and the general public, place a most urgent and serious responsibility on law enforcement agencies. However, the protection of life and property is a responsibility that cannot be delegated to law enforcement alone. Every citizen must be prepared to accept his or her responsibility if we are to enjoy a safe place in which to live and work.

Information for the preparation of this document was obtained from Office of the Provost Marshal General, Deparement of the Army, bomb squads of State and metropolitan police departments, the Security Department, Southern Bell Telephone Company, and actual experience of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms Special Investigators during the investigation of bombings and bomb threats. The ideas and methods suggested reflect the most current information available to help you in dealing with a problem that is fast reaching epidemic proportions throughout the country.

One suggestion in this document should be emphasized; it is preparedness. When one is equipped with an organized plan, most bomb threat problems can be resolved with minimal personal injury and property damage.

By making this "Bomb Threats and Search Techniques" available to selected persons, we in ATF are attempting to help you help yourself in dealing with bomb threats and the use of explosives for illegal purposes.

Rex D. Davis

REX D. DAVIS, DIRECTOR
ALCOHOL, TOBACCO AND FIREARMS DIVISION

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Purpose of Calls

The only two reasonable explanations for a call reporting that a bomb is to go off in a particular installation are:

1
The caller has definite knowledge or believes that an explosive or incendiary has been or will be placed and he wants to minimize personal injury or property damage. The caller may be the person who placed the device or someone else who has become aware of such information.

2
The caller wants to create an atmosphere of anxiety and panic which will, in turn, possibly result in a disruption of the normal activities at the installation where the device is purportedly located.

When a bomb threat call has been received, there will be a reaction to it. If the call is directed to an installation where a vacuum of leadership exists or where there has been no organized advance planning to handle such threats, the call will result in panic.

Panic

Panic is one of the most contagious of all human emotions. Panic is defined as a "sudden, excessive, unreasoning, infectious terror." Panic is caused by fear—fear of the known or the unknown. Panic can also be defined in the context of a bomb threat call as the ultimate achievement of the caller.

Once a state of panic has been reached, the potential for personal injury and property damage is dramatically increased. Emergency and essential facilities can be shut down or abandoned and the community denied their use at a critical time.

Leaving facilities unattended can lead to destruction of the facility and the surrounding area. Large chemical manufacturing plants, power plants, unattended boilers, and other such facilities require the attention of operating personnel.

Other effects of not being prepared or not having an organized plan to handle bomb threat calls can result in a lack of confidence in the leadership. This will be reflected in lower productivity or reluctance to continue employment at a location that is being subjected to bomb threat calls.

Preparation

Lines of organization and plans must be made in advance to handle bomb threats. Clear-cut levels of authority must be established. It is important that each person handle his assignment without delay and without any signs of fear.

Only by using an established organization and procedure can you handle these problems with the least risk. This will instill confidence and eliminate panic.

In planning, you should designate a control center or command post. This control center should be located in the switchboard room or other focal point of telephone or radio communications. The management personnel assigned to operate the control center should have decision-making authority on the action to be taken during the threat. Reports on the progress of the search and evacuation should be made to the control center. Only those with assigned duties should be permitted in the control center. Make some provision for alternates in the event someone is absent when the threat is received.

Evacuation

The most serious of all decisions to be made by management in the event of a bomb threat is evacuation or non-evacuation of the building.

The decision to evacuate or not to evacuate may be made during the planning phase. Management may pronounce a carte blanche policy that in the event of a bomb threat, evacuation will be effective immediately. This decision

circumvents the calculated risk and gives prime consideration for the safety of personnel in the building. This can result in production down-time, and can be costly, if the threat is a hoax. The alternative is for management to make the decision on the spot at the time of the threat. There is no magic formula which can produce the proper decision.

In the past, the vast majority of bomb threats turned out to be hoaxes. However, today more of the threats are materializing. Thus, management's first consideration must be for the safety of people. It is practically impossible to determine immediately whether a bomb threat is real.

Investigations have revealed that the targets for "terrorist bombings" are not selected at random. The modus operandi for selecting the target(s) and planting the explosive appears to follow this pattern. The target is selected because of political or personal gain to the terrorist. It is then kept under surveillance to determine the entrances and exits most used, and when. This is done to determine the hours when very few people are in the building. The thesis is that the intent is not to injure or kill people but to destroy the building. Reconnaissance of the building is made to locate an area where a bomb can be concealed, do the most damage, and where the "bomber" is least likely to be observed.

A test, or dry run, of the plan is often made. After the "dry run" and at a predetermined time, the building is infiltrated by the "bomber(s)" to deliver the explosives or incendiary device. The device may be fully or partially pre-set prior to planting. If it is fully set and charged, it is a simple matter for one or two of the group to plant the device in a pre-selected concealed area. This can be accomplished in a minimum of time. If the device is not fully set and charged, one member may act as a lookout while others arm and place the device. Most devices used for the destruction of property are usually of the time-delay type. These devices can be set for detonation to allow sufficient time for the "bomber(s)" to be a considerable distance away before the bomb-threat call is made and the device is detonated.

The terrorists have developed their plan of attack and the following procedures are suggested to business and industry for coping with bomb threats.

Procedure Before Bomb Threat

1
Contact the police, fire department or other local governmental agencies to determine whether any has a bomb disposal unit. Under what conditions is the bomb disposal unit available? What is the telephone number? How can you obtain the services of the bomb disposal unit in the event of a bomb threat? Will the bomb disposal unit assist in the physical search of the building or will they only disarm or remove explosives?

2
Establish strict procedures for control and inspection of packages and material entering critical areas.

3
Develop a positive means of identifying and controlling personnel who are authorized access to critical areas.

4
Arrange, if possible, to have police and/or fire representatives with members of your staff inspect the building for areas where explosives are likely to be concealed. This may be accomplished by reviewing the floor plan of the building.

5
During the inspection of the building, you should give particular attention to elevator shafts, all ceiling areas, rest rooms, access doors, and crawl space in rest rooms and areas used as access to plumbing fixtures, electrical fixtures, utility and other closet areas, space under stairwells, boiler (furnace) rooms, flammable storage areas, main switches and valves, e.g., electric, gas, and fuel,

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indoor trash receptacles, record storage areas, mail rooms, ceiling lights with easily removable panels, and fire hose racks. While this list is not complete, it can give you an idea where a time-delayed explosive or an incendiary device may be concealed.

6

All security and maintenance personnel should be alert to suspicious looking people. Also to foreign or suspicious objects or parcels.

7

You should instruct security and maintenance personnel to make periodic checks of all rest rooms, stairwells, under stairwells, and other areas of the building to assure that unauthorized personnel are not hiding or reconnoitering or surveilling the area.

8

You should assure adequate protection for classified documents, proprietary information and other records essential to the operation of your business. A well-planted, properly charged device could, upon detonation, destroy those records needed in day-to-day operations. Computers have also been singled out as targets by bombers.

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Instruct all personnel, especially those at the telephone switchboard, of what to do if a bomb threat call is received.

a Keep the caller on the line as long as possible. Ask him to repeat the message. Record every word spoken by the person.

b If the caller does not indicate the location of the bomb or the time of possible detonation, you should ask him for this information.

c Inform the caller that the building is occupied and the detonation of a bomb could result in death or serious injury to many innocent people.

d Pay particular attention to peculiar background noises such as, motors running, background music, and any other noise which may give a clue as to where the call is being made.

e Listen closely to the voice (male, female), voice quality (calm, excited), accents and speech impediments. Immediately after the caller hangs up, you should report to the person designated by management to receive such information. Since the law enforcement personnel will want to talk first-hand with the person who received the call, he should remain available until they appear.

f Report this information immediately to the police department, fire department, ATF, FBI, and other appropriate agencies. The sequence of notification should have been established during coordination in item 1 above.

10

Organize and train an evacuation unit consisting of key management personnel. The organization and training of this unit should be coordinated with other tenants of the building.

a The evacuation unit should be trained on how to evacuate the building during a bomb threat. You should consider priority of evacuation, i.e., evacuation by floor level. Evacuate the floor levels above the danger area in order to remove those persons from danger as quickly as possible. Training in this type of evacuation should be available from police, fire or other units within the community.

b You may also train the evacuation unit in search techniques, or you may prefer a separate search unit. To be proficient in searching the building, search personnel must be thoroughly familiar with all hallways, restrooms, false ceiling areas and every location in the building where an explosive or incendiary device may be concealed. When the police or firemen arrive at the building, if they have not previously reconnoitered the building, the contents and the floor plan will be strange to them. Thus, it is extremely important that the evacuation or search unit be thoroughly trained and familiar with the floor plan of the building and immediate outside areas.

c The evacuation or search unit should be trained only in evacuation and search techniques and not in the techniques of

neutralizing removing or otherwise having contact with the device.

Do not touch a strange or suspicious object. Its location and description should be reported to the person designated to receive this information.

The removal and disarming of a bomb or suspicious object must be left to the professionals in explosive ordnance disposal. Who these professionals are and how to contact them for assistance is something that you should include in any bomb threat plan.

All requests for assistance should be directed to one or more of the Emergency Numbers listed on page three of this booklet. Be sure that the telephone numbers for these agencies are included in your plan.

d If the danger zone is located, the area should be blocked off or barricaded with a clear zone of three hundred feet until the object has been removed or disarmed..

e During the search of the building, a rapid two-way communication system is of utmost importance. Such a system can be readily established through existing telephones. CAUTION—the use of radios during the search can be dangerous. The radio transmission energy can cause premature detonation of an electric initiator (blasting cap).

f The signal for evacuating the building during a bomb threat should be the same as that used for evacuation in case of fire. The use of a different signal for bomb threats may create unnecessary excitement and confusion during evacuation.

g If the building is evacuated, controls must be established immediately to prevent unauthorized access to the building. These controls may have to be provided by management. If proper coordination has been effected with the local police and other agencies, these may assist in establishing controls to prevent re-entry into the building until the danger has passed

h Evacuate the persons to a safe distance away from the building to protect them against debris and other flying objects if there is an explosion. If the building is evacuated, all gas and fuel lines should be cut off at the main valve. All electrical equipment should be turned off prior to evacuation. The decision to cut off all electrical power at the main switch should be made by management with consideration given to lighting requirements for search teams.

i During the search, the medical personnel of the building should be alerted to stand by in case of an accident caused by an explosion of the device.

j Fire brigade personnel should be alerted to stand by to man fire extinguishers.

k Pre-emergency plans should include a temporary relocation in the event the bomb threat materializes and the building is determined to be unsafe.

Room Search

The following technique is based on use of a two-man searching team. There are many minor variations possible in searching a room. The following contains only the basic techniques.

First Team Action—listening

When the two-man search team enters the room to be searched, they should first move to various parts of the room and stand quietly, with their eyes shut and listen for a clock-work device. Frequently, a clock-work mechanism can be quickly detected without use of special equipment. Even if no clockwork mechanism is detected, the team is now aware of the background noise level within the room itself.

Background noise or transferred sound is always disturbing during a building search. In searching a building, if a ticking sound is heard but cannot be located, one might become unnerved. The ticking sound may come from an unbalanced air conditioner fan several floors away or from a dripping sink down the hall. Sound will transfer through air conditioning ducts, along water pipes

and through walls, etc. One of the worst types of buildings to work in is one that has steam or water heat. This type of building will constantly thump, crack, chatter and tick due to the movement of the steam or hot water through the pipes and the expansion and contraction of the pipes. Background noise may also be outside traffic sounds, rain, wind, etc.

Second Team Action—Division of Room and Selection of Search Height

The man in charge of the room searching team should look around the room and determine how the room is to be divided for searching and to what height the first searching sweep should extend. The first searching sweep will cover all items resting on the floor up to the selected height.

Dividing The Room. You should divide the room into two equal parts or as near equal as possible. This equal division should be based on the number and type of objects in the room to be searched, not the size of the room. An imaginary line is then drawn between two objects in the room, i.e., the edge of the window on the north wall to the floor lamp on the south wall.

Selection of First Searching Height. Look at the furniture or objects in the room and determine the average height of the majority of items resting on the floor. In an average room this height usually includes table or desk tops, chair backs, etc. The first searching height usually covers the items in the room up to hip height.

First Room Searching Sweep

After the room has been divided and a searching height has been selected, both men go to one end of the room division line and start from a back-to-back position. This is the starting point, and the same point will be used on each successive searching sweep. Each man now starts searching his way around the room, working toward the other man, checking all items resting on the floor around the wall area of the room. When the two men meet, they will have completed a "wall sweep" and should then work together and check all items in the middle of the room up to the selected hip height. Don't forget to check the floor under the rugs. This first searching sweep should also include those items which may be mounted on or in the walls, such as air-conditioning ducts, baseboard heaters, built-in wall cupboards, etc., if these fixtures are below hip height. The first searching sweep usually consumes the most time and effort. During all searching sweeps, use the electronic or medical stethoscope on walls, furniture items, floors, etc.

Second Room Searching Sweep

The man in charge again looks at the furniture or objects in the room and determines the height of the second searching sweep. This height is usually from the hip to the chin or top of the head. The two men return to the starting point and repeat the searching techniques at the second selected searching height. This sweep usually covers pictures hanging on the walls, built-in bookcases, tall table lamps, etc.

Third Room Searching Sweep

When the second searching sweep is completed, the man in charge again determines the next searching height, usually from the chin or the top of the head up to the ceiling. The third sweep is then made. This sweep usually covers high mounted air conditioning ducts, hanging light fixtures, etc.

Fourth Room Searching Sweep

If the room has a false or suspended ceiling, the fourth sweep involves investigation of this area. Check flush or ceiling-mounted light fixtures, air-conditioning or ventilation ducts, sound or speaker systems, electrical wiring, structural frame members, etc.

9

Not all rooms will require three or four searching sweeps. You can cover the average hotel room with only two searching sweeps. The first sweep, floor to hip, will cover most of the furniture items and fixtures; the second sweep will usually extend up to the ceiling. Some of the items mentioned in this section are mentioned in other areas of the text. They are being emphasized because of their importance; also to maintain the chronology of the search technique.

The Search

All authorities agree that the most effective search of a building can be made by occupants of that building. The average community cannot supply the police officers or firemen necessary to make a fast and thorough search of a facility such as a school, office building, manufacturing plant, etc. Even if such manpower were available, it would not be the most highly qualified to conduct the search.

Since the terrorist does not label the device with the word "bomb," what should we look for? What does a bomb look like? No one knows. It can be packaged in as many different ways as the imagination will allow. Some devices may be the size of a cigarette package; others may be as large as a two and one-half ton truck.

Since the object of the search can vary in size and shape, it is a fundamental rule that the search must be made by persons who are familiar with the area and will notice a foreign object. However, the use of occupants of the premises to conduct the search may result in hysteria from the threat unless there has been careful planning. There should be no reluctance in assigning females to conduct the search if they are the ones most familiar with the area. Women are as qualified to carry out this function as men.

If the facility has a public address system, the search team can be alerted to commence the search by a code signal; e.g., "Mr. Franklin, please come to the office." Any code suitable to the location may be used.

In writing a search plan, the premises to be searched should be divided into areas. Each area should be assigned to people familiar with it. They should make a periodic familiarization survey of the area noting what objects are normally there. Grill covers over heating and air-conditioning ducts should be inspected. A subsequent inspection may reveal any entry or tampering.

Detonating or igniting an explosive or incendiary may depend on a change in environment; e.g., temperature variations, the presence of an electrical current, etc. Therefore, those who conduct the search should be cautioned not to cause any change in the environment. Do not go into a dark room and turn on the lights, use a flashlight; and do not change the setting of thermostats.

OTHER SEARCH TECHNIQUES

1
Designate a staff member or supervisor as floor or area warden for each floor, or several area wardens for single story buildings. Wardens should be responsible for directing the search, receiving information from search personnel and relaying it to the control center.

2
Alert medical personnel to standby during the search. Immediate medical attention will be available in case of accidental or premature detonation.

3
Alert fire brigade personnel to standby.

4
Have security guards, maintenance men and janitors search hallways, restrooms, stairwells, elevator shafts, utility closets, and areas outside the building.

5
Direct office workers to search their immediate areas.

6
Have a report made to the appropriate warden when the search is completed.

7
Have a sign or marker posted indicating "Search Completed" conspicuously in the area. Use a piece of colored scotch tape across the door and door jamb approximately two feet above floor level if the use of signs is not practica'.

The room searching technique can be expanded. The same basic technique can be used to search a convention hall or airport terminal.

Restated, to search an area you should:

1
Divide the area and select a search height

2
Start from the bottom and work up

3
Start back-to-back and work toward each other

4
Go around the walls then into the center of the room.

Encourage the use of common sense or logic in searching. If a guest speaker at a convention has been threatened, common sense would indicate searching the speakers platform and microphones first, but always return to the searching technique. Do not rely on random or spot checking of only logical target areas. The bomber may not be a logical person.

Suspicious Object Located

Note: It is imperative tnat personnel involved in the search be instructed that their mission is only to search for and report suspicious objects, not to move, jar or touch the object or anything attached thereto. The removal/disarming of a bomb must be left to the professionals in explosive ordnance disposal. Remember that bombs and explosives are made to explode, and there are no absolutely safe methods of handling them.

(1) Report the location and an accurate description of the object to the appropriate warden. This information is relayed immediately to the control center who will call police, fire department, and rescue squad. These officers should be met and escorted to the scene.

(2) Place sandbags or mattresses, not metal shield plates, around the object. Do not attempt to cover the object.

(3) Identify the danger area, and block it off with a clear zone of at last 300 feet—include area below and above the object.

(4) Check to see that all doors and windows are open to minimize primary damage from blast and secondary damage from fragmentation.

(5) Evacuate the building.

(6) Do not permit re-entry into the building until the device has been removed/disarmed, and the building declared safe for re-entry.

We in ATF recognize your responsibility to the public and the necessity for maintaining good public relations. This responsibility also includes the safety and protection of the public. We may well be approaching the point, when in the interest of security and protection of people, some inconvenience may have to be imposed on persons visiting public buildings.

Perhaps entrances and exits can be modified with a minimal expenditure to channel all personnel through someone at a registration desk. Personnel entering the building would be required to sign a register showing the name and room number of the person whom they wish to visit. Employees at these registration desks could contact the person to be visited and advise him that a visitor, by name, is in the lobby. The person to be visited may, in the interest of security and protection, decide to come to the lobby to meet this individual to ascertain that the purpose of the visit is valid and official. A system for signing out when the individual departs could be integrated into this procedure. There is no question that such a procedure would result in many complaints from the public. If it were explained to the visitor by the person at the registration desk

that these procedures were implemented in his best interest and safety, the complaints would be reduced.

Other factors for consideration include:

1
Installation of closed-circuit television.

2
Installation of metal detecting devices.

3
Posting of signs indicating the use of closed circuit television or other detection devices.

The above are suggestions—in the final analysis of this entire complex problem, the decision is yours.

Buildings–Their Problem

The physical construction of buildings and their surrounding areas vary widely. Following are a few of the problems search teams will encounter.

Outside Areas

When you search outside areas, pay particular attention to street drainage systems, manholes in the street and in the sidewalk. Thoroughly check trash receptacles, garbage cans, dumpsters, incinerators, etc. Check parked cars and trucks. Check mail boxes if there is a history of placement in your area.

Schools

School bombings are usually directed against non-student areas. Find out which teachers or staff members are unpopular and where they work. The problem areas in schools are student lockers and the chemistry laboratory.

Student lockers are locked; no accurate record of the combinations are available because students change lockers at will. Every other locker seems to "tick." Alarm clocks, wrist watches, leaking thermos jugs and white mice, all make "ticking" sounds. Have the school authorities or police cut off the locks; then search teams should open the lockers. If you cut off the lock you may end up paying for it.

Chemistry labs should be treated with caution. Each year some student tries to make an explosive mixture or rocket fuel in the classroom, gets scared, and phones in a bomb call. The best procedure is to get the chemistry teacher and ask him to inspect the classroom, lab and chemical storage area with you. He will know 90% of the items in the lab which leaves only 10% to worry about.

If repeated bomb threats are received at schools in your area, recommend that the school board hold make-up classes on Saturday. This tends to cut down the number of bomb scares.

Office Buildings

The biggest problem in office buildings is many locked desks. A repair of desk locks is an expensive item. There will be many other items to keep you busy, such as filing cabinets, storage closets, wall lockers, etc. Watch out for the company's security system if they deal in fashions of any type, the automotive or aircraft industry, defense contracts, or the toy industry. Electrical leads, electrical tapes, electric eyes, electrical pressure mats, electrical microswitches, will all ring those huge bells that no one knows how to turn off.

Auditoriums, Amphitheaters, and Convention Halls

Here, thousands of seats must be checked on hands and knees. Look for cut or unfastened seats with a bomb inserted into the cushion or back. Check out the stage area which has tons of equipment in it; also the speaker's platform and the microphones. The area under the stage generally has crawlways, tunnels, trapdoors, dressing rooms, and storage areas. The sound system is extensive and the air-conditioning system is unbelievable. The entire roof area, in a theater, frequently has one huge storage room and maintenance area above it. Check all hanging decorations and lighting fixtures.

Airport Terminals

This structure combines all problems covered under schools, office buildings, and auditoriums, plus outside areas and aircraft.

Elevator Wells and Shafts

Elevator wells are usually one to three feet deep with grease, dirt and trash and must be probed by hand. To check elevator shafts, get on the top of the car with two six-volt lanterns, move the car up a floor (or part of a floor) at a time and look around the shaft. Be prepared to find nooks, closets, storage rooms, false panels, walk areas, and hundreds of empty whiskey bottles in paper bags. Don't forget that as you go up, the counterweights are coming down—check them too. The elevator machinery is generally located on the roof. A Word of Caution: Watch for strong winds in the elevator shaft. Don't stand near the edge of the car.

Handling of the News Media

It is of paramount importance that all inquiries by the news media be directed to one person appointed as spokesman. All other persons should be instructed not to discuss the situation with outsiders, especially the news media.

The purpose of this provision is to furnish the news media with accurate information and see that additional bomb threat calls are not precipitated by irresponsible statements from uninformed sources.

Suggested form to be completed following

Bomb Threat Calls

Type of Complainant:

☐ School ☐ Hospital ☐ Industrial Manufacturing Company ☐ Business ☐ Other

Business Name of Complainant

Business Address

Business Telephone

Name of Person Reporting Complaint

Telephone Number That Call Was Received On | Date and Time of Call

Name of Person Who Talked to the Caller

Exact Words said by Caller

Background Noises (i.e., Street Sounds, Baby Crying, etc.)

Information about Caller:

Age | Sex | Race | Accent | Educational Level

Speech Impediments (Drunk, Lisp, etc.) | Attitude (Calm, Excited, etc.)

Any Suspects
☐ Yes ☐ No

Have Previous Calls Been Received? | If Yes, Approximately How Many?
☐ Yes ☐ No

Has the Telephone Company Security Department Been Notified?
☐ Yes ☐ No

Was any Incendiary or Explosive Device Found?
☐ Yes ☐ No

Number of Threats Received Thus Far During Calendar Year

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